

[Mart Banta]

Memoir

REMINISCENCES OF MART BANTA

Mr. Mart Banta lives in the Beaver Creek community on Beaver creek in the northwestern part of the Wichita county, and has lived there continuously since 1877, where his father settled with his family when Mart was a very small child. Mr. Banta is an outstanding citizen in his community. His "Reminiscences" are on file in the [Kemo?] Public Library.

"My father, J.H.Banta, was born and reared in Missouri, and after the war he came back home and he was never at ease. The state was so torn up after the war, so he decided to migrate. He first went to Colorado. After he stayed there in Colorado for six or seven years, he decided that it was too cold. He wanted a warmer climate. So, he sold his cattle, put his family in the wagon and started out. All he had in the world was his family, his wagon and team, and \$600. So, then he started for Texas. Instead of coming directly he had to go back east through Kansas and then go through the Indian Territory, via of Fort Sill, and then into Texas. He went on down as far as San Saba county, in south Texas. But he wasn't satisfied, and turned back north and came to Henrietta. There he met a man by the name of C.B.Patterson. He told him that he was disappointed, that he had not found what suited him, and Mr. Patterson asked him what he was looking for. He replied that he wanted wood, water, grass and game all at one place. Mr. Patterson promised that he could show him where to find that kind of a country; so he left his family and went with Mr. Patterson up on Beaver creek. There he found all the things he had been looking for, and there he settled in 1877. C. [md;] 12. Tex.

"Father hauled the lumber to build his house from Sherman, and finished it in the fall of 1877. The next morning he started on the two-day trip to Henrietta to get the family. I was

Library of Congress

then four years old, having been born in Colorado. the The next day after we got to our new home Fahter Father went down to the creek and killed a buffalo. Our / full diet of meat for the next four 2 years was made up of wild turkey, deer, antelope, and buffalo. We used the buffalo tallow for lard. We also used lots of jerky, which is dried meat, usually deer or buffalo.

“There were no settlers near us when my father come here.. The nearest neighbors I can remember were two men who were working for Burk Burnett, and lived in a little log house on his place. They were Tom W. Roberts and Dick Sparks. They lived three miles down the creek from where we lived, where is now located the Texas Company dam. We got our mail from Henrietta through the Ikard Ranch. They would bring our mail and supplies from Henrietta whenever they were going, something like once a month. There was nothing in Wichita Falls at that time. There was a crossing at the falls in the Wichita river. The falls, for which the city was named, were about six feet high and were located about two hundred feet above the rail road bridge. There was a solid rock bottom at the falls, and you could cross the river there when you could not cross at any other place.

“My father was desirous of entering the cattle business and went to see Burnett, Waggoner, and Ikard and asked them if they would cooperate with him by giving him part time work if he had a herd of cattle, and they replied, 'No'. They didn't want anything to do with him if he owned cattle of his own, so my father went into the sheep business.

“The first man that moved in was a Baptist preacher named John W. Campbell. My father, when he moved in, had settled on a parcel of land known as the scrap Inad, about 251 acres. He got the idea in his head that he could only hold one hundred sixty acres on account of the homestead law. So, when this preacher came along he deeded him the ninety acres, and retained the claim to one hundred sixty acres, now known as the John W. Campbell survey. 3 “The next settler that I remember was Jno W. Carter, who was known as 'Pap ' Carter. [The?] next neighbor was T. G. Stearns. About 1880 the Powells came. He was a local Methodist preacher. We had services around at the home's for

Library of Congress

two or three years. These two preachers would preach around at the houses of whoever wanted them. There were very few parties or entertainments; once in a while there was an old fashioned dance.

“There were no fences—all free range. We ran sheep there until 1888. At that time the country began to close up; people began to settle on the land, and Father had to quit the sheep business on account of not having enough land enclosed to take care of them.

“Our mother and father had school for us in the evenings at home before we could go to school. Our text books were the Blue Back Speller, Ray's Arithmetic in three parts, and McGuffey's Readers, which went up to the sixth grade. Whenever we wanted something to read our mother would say, 'There is the Bible'. We had all read it through before we started to school. One day one of the boys got a hold of Gulliver's Travels, and could not read it in peace for all the rest of us wanting him to read it aloud—or let us have the book.

“The first school on Beaver Creek, and the first in the county, was taught by T.B. Sparks, of Clinton, Missouri, an uncle of mine, who was then about eighteen years old. The school was located on the north side of the creek on the land now owned by George B. Amcell. The tuition was 75¢ per month per scholar, and they had about ten scholars.

“The next school was the public school organized at Beaver Creek in 1884. It now stands on the same plot of ground where it was organized. I am a trustee in this school where I went to school myself fifty years ago.

“We had a teacher there at Beaver Creek in the early days by the name of L.H. Rosser, who was an ex-college president from Alabama. He handled them all and had plenty of time to spare. He taught us for four years. His hobby was math. He was my first teacher in the public school. I was in about the sixth grade when I entered school.

Library of Congress

"There was a prep. school at Vernon, organized in about 1894 o4 1895, where scholars prepared for college. Six of my classmates went. Prof. Morris, who taught this school, said he could pick out every scholar from Mr. Rosser's school by his work.

"The first suit of ready made clothes I ever had I bought from J.A. Kemp here in Wichita. His store was located on the east side of Ohio Avenue, about where Nick's Hat Shop now is.

"One day when the creek was low my father caught a cat fish that weighed seventy-two pounds. He put it in a wagon, and put wet clothes over it, and hauled it to Henrietta alive.

"I now own the old home place where my father originally settled, and have lived there during all the intervening years. Our house stands now on the same plot where Father erected his first house, and ours is the fourth to stand on this spot. It is in a grove of Chinaberry trees.